(iv) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehended and prosecute wildlife offenders.

(v) Government of India has set up Regional and Sub-regional Offices for wildlife preservation in major export and trade centres of the country to prevent smuggling of wild animals and their products.

(vi) Financial and technical help is provided to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, *viz.* Project Tiger, Project Elephant and Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals.

(vii) A National Wildlife Action Plan, 2002—16 was adopted by the Indian Board for Wildlife under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister in January, 2002. The plan outlines the strategy for conservation and protection of wildlife in the country.

(viii) Government of India is a signatory to many international conventions concerning biodiversity conservation and control of illegal trade in wild flora and fauna.

(ix) Bilateral agreements have been signed with Nepal and Republic of China for controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife.

(x) A Global Tiger Forum of tiger range countries has been created for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.

(xi) A proposal for creating a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been made.

Complaints of torture and harassment of elephants

2096. SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been complaints of torture and harassment of elephants in the State of Tamil Nadu in the name of recreation, etc; and

(b) if so, the remedial action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Diversion of forest land

2097. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Govemment of Karnataka has been requesting the Central Government for diverting forest land in Karnataka;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether due to non-release of forest land, the State has been put in a precarious situation to dispose of hazardous waste; and

(d) if so, the alternative measures taken to grant approval to the State Government to dispose of hazardous wastes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Central Govemment receives request from Govemment of Karnataka for diversion of forest land under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, for development projects like power, transmission lines, roads, railways, irrigation, mining, drinking water etc., from time to time. A total of 530 such projects involving about 37,890 hectare of forest land have been approved by the Central Government under the Act.

(c) No, Sir, Central Government has already approved a proposal in October, 2002, for diversion of 50 hectare of forest land for disposal of hazardous wastes in favour of Karnataka State Pollution Control Board in Kolar District, Karnataka. No other proposal from the State Government has been received for diversion of forest land for disposal of hazardous wastes by the Central Government.

(d) Does not arise.

Hurdles in achieving target for forest cover

2098. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
SHRI G.K. VASAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: